

**Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)
Final Performance Report**

The final performance report summarizes the outcome of your FMPP award objectives. As stated in the FMPP Terms and Conditions, you will not be eligible for future FMPP or Local Food Promotion Program grant funding unless all close-out procedures are completed, including satisfactory submission of this final performance report.

This final report will be made available to the public once it is approved by FMPP staff. Write the report in a way that promotes your project's accomplishments, as this document will serve as not only a learning tool, but a promotional tool to support local and regional food programs. Particularly, recipients are expected to provide both qualitative and quantitative results to convey the activities and accomplishments of the work.

The report is limited to 10 pages and is due **within 90 days** of the project's performance period end date, or sooner if the project is complete. Provide answers to each question, or answer "not applicable" where necessary. It is recommended that you email or fax your completed performance report to FMPP staff to avoid delays:

FMPP Phone: 202-690-4152; Email: USDAFMPPQuestions@ams.usda.gov; Fax: 202-690-4152

Should you need to mail your documents via hard copy, contact FMPP staff to obtain mailing instructions.

Report Date Range: (e.g. September 30, 20XX-September 29, 20XX)	October 1 st 2015-September 31 st 2017
Authorized Representative Name:	Emily Turonis
Authorized Representative Phone:	201-240-5840
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Recipient Organization Name:	Ironbound Community Corporation
Project Title as Stated on Grant Agreement:	Down Neck Farmers' Market Initiative
Grant Agreement Number: (e.g. 14-FMPPX-XX-XXXX)	15FMPPNJ0103
Year Grant was Awarded:	2015
Project City/State:	Newark, NJ
Total Awarded Budget:	\$99,980

FMPP staff may contact you to follow up for long-term success stories. Who may we contact?

- ☐ Same Authorized Representative listed above (check if applicable).
- ☐ Different individual: Name: _____; Email: _____; Phone: _____

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1. State the goals/objectives of your project as outlined in the grant narrative and/or approved by FMPP staff. If the goals/objectives from the narrative have changed from the grant narrative, please highlight those changes (e.g. “new objective”, “new contact”, “new consultant”, etc.). You may add additional goals/objectives if necessary. For each item below, qualitatively discuss the progress made and indicate the impact on the community, if any.
 - i. **Goal/Objective 1:** Triple ICC’s urban agriculture production from approximately 1200 pounds of produce to produce annually at least 3600 pounds.
 - a. Progress Made: This season we were able to meet this goal! We produced 3,715 pounds of produce throughout our 3 gardens and our urban farm.
 - b. Impact on Community: Most of the 3,715 pounds of our fruits and vegetables was directly distributed to our garden and farm volunteers and their families, as well as neighbors of the farm and local seniors. The rest of the produce was sold during our local farmers market at low prices. The impact of the fruits and vegetables that we grow has actually increased because the only major supermarket in our neighborhood closed about 6 months ago, and people have lost the largest source of fresh produce in our area. This event has demonstrated the precariousness of food access and shown us how important growing food within the neighborhood is.
 - ii. **Goal/Objective 2:** Complete the development of a vacant lot into an urban farm and farmer’s market.
 - a. Progress Made: In the past 2 years we have achieved our goal of transforming our vacant lot into a flourishing farm and successful farmers’ market. When we first gained access to the site, it was half an acre of asphalt. We now have a tree orchard, we have grapes growing up the fence, we have fig trees, we have blueberry, strawberry and raspberry bushes, we have seasonal flowers always planted, and we have our annual crop area where we grow corn, squash, beans, melons, greens and much more. We have had a successful weekly Farmers Market that has developed a regular customer base over the course of two seasons, and has brought a lot of foot traffic onto the farm.
 - b. Impact on Community: We went from having no market, and no real reason for someone who was not a farm volunteer to walk onto our site off the street, to cultivating a solid group of repeat customers who came to value the flavor and freshness of the produce and agricultural goods available at the market. We saw the impact that our market had on local residents when they expressed how much they would truly miss it at the end of the season. In addition many of our customers told us that they enjoyed the experience of talking with farmers about the products, of learning what was in season when, and discovering what New Jersey produce looks like. As was mentioned above, our major local grocery store closed recently, and so the produce from the farmers’ market took on an even more special importance. Having the DJ twice a month at the market added to a festive atmosphere, and an inviting environment that people wanted to be a part of.
 - iii. **Goal/Objective 3:** Engage 350 residents of all ages in community gardening and urban agriculture activities.
 - a. Progress Made: We engaged over 1,200 residents of all ages in community gardening and urban agriculture activities.

- b. Impact on Community: Many toddlers, students, parents, teachers, crossing guards, fire fighters, neighbors of the farm, seniors and people walking by were able to gain a better understanding of urban farming and how it relates to their life through our community gardening and urban agriculture activities. Residents learned about the importance of bees, about raised beds and contaminated soil, about growing organic, about the bursting flavor of fresh food, about seed saving, about space-making, about mulching, about cover cropping, about watering, weeding, and harvesting, about direct planting seeds, about planting seeds in a greenhouse, about natural fertilizers, about composting, about how flowers bring pollinators, about birds, about how to plant tulips and garlic in the fall, and most importantly of all, how working on a shared project brings us closer together, increases our self-esteem, and makes us a stronger community.

Goal/Objective 4: Engage 120 youth in community gardening, nutrition, and environmental justice workshops

- a. Progress Made: We had over 290 young people engaged in community gardening, nutrition and environmental justice workshops.
- b. Impact on Community: Young people learned new skills and became actively involved in the transformation of a vacant lot into a farm. Students planted, harvested, raked, built wood beds, planted trees, shoveled dirt and mulch, applied fertilizer, etc. They helped us in creating value-added products that they helped to sell at our farmer's market, and this boosted their self-esteem because they were able to teach new things to adult customers. This provided exposure to skills that are not currently taught in public school in our area, and gave them an opportunity to engage in hands on educational activities.

Goal/Objective 5: Increase access to local produce and agricultural products in a low-income area

- a. Progress Made: Our farmer's markets increased access to local produce in our low-income area. We also started running pop-up markets where our staff purchased produce wholesale directly from one of our rural farmers from our market, and our staff along with volunteers sold the produce at different key locations throughout the neighborhood. From the first season to the second season one adjustment that we made was prioritizing having a DJ or some type of music/entertainment at more of our Farmer's Markets, because we found that more residents attended the market and subsequently purchased agricultural products when the market had a more festive environment.
- b. Impact on Community: Thousands of pounds of produce were sold and distributed in our low-income neighborhood. The impact of this is particularly important since our major supermarket closed and food insecurity throughout the neighborhood has reached new heights. The impact of the mobile markets was that more people became aware of our programs, we engaged new customers, and expanded the reach of our program. Every week the youth in our urban agriculture program brought home large bags of fresh produce and eggs that they had helped to grow, and led the way in their families toward healthy, local eating.

- vi. **Goal/Objective 6:** Establish relationships between agricultural producers and low-income consumers
 - a. Progress Made: During our farmer's market, over the course of two seasons of regular weekly markets, many local residents who previously did not have relationships with agricultural producers got to directly buy from agricultural producers.
 - b. Impact on Community: Our local residents became acquainted and made relationships with farmers and producers of agricultural products. Through these conversations we saw community residents learning about the seasonal nature of how different goods are available at different times, coming to appreciate the special time when strawberries or apples are ready, and learning to generally appreciate the quality of local producers. Also, residents
- vii. **Goal/Objective 7:** Increase knowledge of our local consumers on how to prepare and eat fresh produce and agricultural products
 - a. Progress Made: We had over 30 markets including Rutgers SNAP Nutrition where they did workshops on nutrition and the benefits of eating fresh produce and agricultural products, and warning against eating processed foods and foods with excessive added salt and sugar. In addition, our farmers provided samples of produce and agricultural products so that customers could try new things. We created
 - b. Impact on Community: Community residents were able to try new foods that were for sale at the market, and to learn about the health benefits of eating fresh produce. Many people were shocked by the nutritional information of typical processed foods and drinks, which inspired a lot of conversation about the relationship between food and health.

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2. Quantify the overall impact of the project on the intended beneficiaries, if applicable, from the baseline date (the start of the award performance period, September 30, 2015__). Include further explanation if necessary.
 - i. Number of direct jobs created: 2
 - ii. Number of jobs retained: 2
 - iii. Number of indirect jobs created: 3
 - iv. Number of markets expanded: 0
 - v. Number of new markets established: 1
 - vi. Market sales increased by \$12,340, which was an infinite increase since we started with zero sales and no market.
 - vii. Number of farmers/producers that have benefited from the project: 5
 - a. Percent Increase: infinite, as started with no market and zero farmers
3. Did you expand your customer base by reaching new populations such as new ethnic groups, additional low income/low access populations, new businesses, etc.? If so, how? Yes we did! We

are proud to say that in our very diverse neighborhood, we had a very diverse showing of customers. We were lucky to have very responsive farmers who brought more of what our local residents asked for. On our farm we also grow special products from Puerto Rico and Ecuador that are difficult to find in local super markets. We found that it is important to have specialty items that are culturally appropriate. In addition, thanks to our ability to accept WIC and SNAP, and also just the demographics of our neighborhood, almost a majority of our customers are low or moderate income.

4. Discuss your community partnerships.
Who are your community partners?

- Rutgers Cooperation Extension
- AeroFarms
- Greater Newark Conservancy
- Newark Fire Department
- Hawkins St. School

i. How have they contributed to the overall results of the FMPP project?

- **Rutgers Cooperation Extension**—Rutgers designed and implemented a rain catchment system specially tailored to the needs of our site.
- **AeroFarms** – Participated in our farmer’s market selling their locally grown produce as well as donated left over construction items from their new site for the furnishings of our farm.
- **Greater Newark Conservancy**—Greater Newark Conservancy brought their Youth Farm Stand to our Harvest Festival to sell locally grown fruits and vegetables sold by local students.
- **Newark Fire Department**—The NFD has been filling our water tank with their fire trucks since we installed it.
- **Hawkins St. School**—Hawkins has sent class trips of students to contribute to our new farm site.
- **Rutgers SNAP Nutrition Program**—They have provided nutrition workshops and displays for shoppers at our farmer’s market throughout the season.

ii. How will they continue to contribute to your project’s future activities, beyond the performance period of this FMPP grant?

- **Rutgers Cooperation Extension**—Is committed to working with community groups who are working on Urban Agriculture, so we anticipate that we will continue to collaborate with them regularly regarding Green Infrastructure Projects and collecting rain water throughout all of our community gardens.
- **AeroFarms** – AeroFarms continues to partner with us in providing agriculture related jobs to our community members that go through our training programs.
- **Greater Newark Conservancy**— We continue to partner with GNC in their urban agriculture education initiatives, such as our staff providing workshops to community members at their sites. Also, we are in the process of planning for some type of Mobile Farmers Market or Pop-Up Farmers Markets throughout the neighborhood, where we would purchase some produce from GNC’s farms.

- **Newark Fire Department**—The Newark Fire Department will continue to fill our water on our farm site.
 - **Hawkins St. School**—We continue to partner with Hawkins Street School on an almost daily basis. We will continue to facilitate class trips to the farm and urban agriculture, nutrition and environmental justice based education on our farm as well as in the school.
 - **Rutgers SNAP Nutrition Program**—Rutgers SNAP Nutrition Program has completely lost funding due to “budget cuts.” For that reason, we do not currently foresee a continuation of the partnership.
5. Are you using contractors to conduct the work? If so, how did their work contribute to the results of the FMPP project? No.
6. Have you publicized any results yet?* Yes.
- i. If yes, how did you publicize the results? We hosted a press conference this summer at during one of our Tuesday markets that highlighted the success of our second year as a running Farmer’s Market. It served as both promotional of the remaining markets and also brought attention to the work done so far.
 - ii. To whom did you publicize the results? Both community residents and to Channel 12 News, our local news station.
 - iii. How many stakeholders (i.e. people, entities) did you reach? About 50 community members in person and thousands through our Channel 12 news coverage.
- *Send any publicity information (brochures, announcements, newsletters, etc.) electronically along with this report. Non-electronic promotional items should be digitally photographed and emailed with this report (do not send the actual item).
7. Have you collected any feedback from your community and additional stakeholders about your work?
- i. If so, how did you collect the information? Yes. Our most direct and frequent tool of collecting feedback from our community residents was engaging with residents who came to shop at the market, and also, maybe even more importantly, to converse with residents who walked onto our site and DID NOT purchase anything. If a resident left without buying anything, we would make an effort to ask them on the way out how they would like to see the market expanded or improved, or what they had hoped to buy. In addition, we were able to integrate conversation and feedback regarding the farmers’ market into some of our major community meetings where we were generally collecting feedbacks on our many different community programs.
 - ii. What feedback was relayed (specific comments)?
 - Over and over again we heard that residents were interested in buying tropical fruits, like pineapple, mangos, avocados, oranges, etc. Since we did not have any of these, a lot of people were not interested in buying vegetables here and having to go to another store to purchase their tropical fruits.
 - Residents at times complained that we did not have the cheapest prices, that Walmart in the next city over is cheaper.
 - Residents wanted to see the market happening more than once a week because they found it difficult to always remember to come, and if you miss it you have to wait another whole week.

- Residents said they would like to see a market where all the fruits and vegetables were grown on our farm site rather than coming from a different farm.

8. Budget Summary:

- As part of the FMPP closeout procedures, you are required to submit the SF-425 (Final Federal Financial Report). Check here if you have completed the SF-425 and are submitting it with this report: ☐
- Did the project generate any income? Yes.
 - If yes, how much was generated and how was it used to further the objectives of the award?
Total in the sales of our own produce we made \$1,300, and used that money to pay for the overhead expenses of our pop-up markets throughout the neighborhood.

9. Lessons Learned:

- Summarize any lessons learned. They should draw on positive experiences (e.g. good ideas that improved project efficiency or saved money) and negative experiences (e.g. what did not go well and what needs to be changed).
 - From our first season to the second season we changed the day of the week and the hours of the market. The first year we chose Saturdays from 10am-3pm, which follows the model of other farmers markets in surrounding cities. However, we found that this was not the most trafficked time in our local area, and we were not happy with the amount of foot traffic. After surveying community residents and doing observations of foot traffic in the area of our market, we decided to change to Tuesdays from 2pm-7pm. This increased the foot traffic of our market. What we learned is that every market is different and should be designed specifically according to the rhythms of an area, rather than the general practices of other operating markets.
 - We found that one way to increase the amount of customers at the market was to have more music at the market, so in the second season we hired several different local DJs to increase vibrancy. While in the short run this cost more money, it is more of a long-run strategy because once someone actually comes onto our site and makes a purchase, then they are aware of the market for years to come. We believe that it is necessary to invest upfront of promotional materials and promotional activities in order to get customers to your market the first time, which we found to be the biggest obstacle.
 - We instituted a Farm-to-Office program at our own agency to boost sales at the market. What we learned from this is that in an area that is not used to having a market, it is important to come up with creative ways to keep the market profitable for farmers. We found that employees of our agency who were not willing to physically come to the market still were interested in purchasing produce once we provided an ordering system and delivery. This approach takes more staff time, more back-office, and more work overall, but all of this is necessary in a place where farmers' market may not be very profitable, especially in the first couple seasons of operation.
 - Since we were establishing a new market, we found it was important to always have a staff member at the entrance to our farm site to engage with people who were passing by and explain what the market was. Even local residents who were curious about the market would not necessarily come in unless we were standing there and inviting them in, because people assumed this market was "not for them" because it was new.

- While we were fortunate to have farmer who sold produce at competitive prices, the produce at the market was not “the cheapest produce available.” Many of our community members make their shopping decisions purely according to price because they are working on very limited budgets. We learned that is important work to continually have one-on-one conversations with community residents about the benefits of locally grown food, to provide samples, and basically to get residents bought into the special quality of what the market had to offer. One good example was the apples for sale at the market. After tasting the apples many customers came back specifically for the apples because they realized that they were better quality than other apples available at other supermarkets. However, if our customers had never gotten the opportunity to taste the apple, they would just be discouraged from buying by the idea that “I can get them for cheaper.” This aspect takes a lot of engagement with market shoppers and residents passing by the farm.
 - We also started experimenting with “Pop-Up” markets in other parts of the neighborhood where we would purchase produce from our farmers and sell it at other key locations. Moving forward we believe that this is a great way to improve food access and increase our customer base by bringing the produce to more locations.
- ii. If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving:
- We had trouble getting to our annual production in the first year because of restrictions on our farm’s site lease that came to light after we had built a great deal of our hoop house. We had a lot of separate stakeholders involved for any change or expansion: we needed internal agency approval, City of Newark approval, School Development approval, and to keep track with our grant deliverables. We found that for as much as we wanted to expand, we had to move very intentionally and do a lot of waiting as to not get burned later on. Our best recommendation: try to own the land you are farming and using! If that’s not possible our best advice is to have patience and maintain a long-term view rather than a rush for results.
- iii. Describe any lessons learned in the administration of the project that might be helpful for others who would want to implement a similar project:
- Especially when working in low-income communities or any community where there is not a farmers market, it is important to have an open mind in terms of adjusting your model, to seek regular feedback from community residents, and also to spread the word as much as you can. Putting up flyers and signs throughout the neighborhood is a necessary first step, but it is also important to speak directly to as many people as you can. We for example scheduled to get 5-10 minutes of speaking time at regular meetings of local groups, churches, knitting clubs, ESL classes, etc. A flyer will only really attract someone who is already interested in farmers market or looking for a great source of produce. However, if people are not really aware of what a farmers market is, or what the benefits of shopping local are, then it’s absolutely necessary to do more intensive forms of outreach beyond promotional materials.
 - It is important always to have a phone number (not just a website or email address) on all promotional materials. We sat through many long phone conversations answering a whole host of questions just to gain one potential customer. But establishing a new market takes a lot of time in talking to local residents and talking them through this

concept. People have become used to shopping at Target and Walmart and buying everything they need, food and otherwise, all in one place. That means that coming to the farmers market increases the amount of time they will spend shopping, so people need to believe there is an added benefit to shopping locally which may not be self-evident.

- While it is important to take all feed-back, it is also important to remember that you cannot please everyone. Some local residents absolutely loved our market once they started shopping with us and felt so disappointed at the end of the market season, while other residents would walk on and say “this is too expensive!” and leave in an abrupt manner. It is not possible to convince all community members of the value of your farmer’s market. Focus your energy on just spreading the word further and further, to attract more people who can inherently find some value in it.

10. Future Work:

- i. How will you continue the work of this project beyond the performance period? In other words, how will you parlay the results of your project’s work to benefit future community goals and initiatives? Include information about community impact and outreach, anticipated increases in markets and/or sales, estimated number of jobs retained/created, and any other information you’d like to share about the future of your project.
 - We are going to continue our farmer’s market into the future, although we will have to adjust the model because at the end of this grant we will no longer have farmer stipends. We are looking into involving low-income community residents through incubating a Farmer’s Market cooperative business where we support the project, provide partnerships, up-front investments, but the residents take on the actual work of selling the produce. This would create 3-5 new jobs. In this model we would purchase wholesale from our farmers, so we would continue to support NJ agriculture.
 - We have retained the one staff person that we hired through this grant through other funding, and she will continue to work on farmer’s market work.
 - Incubating a consumer cooperative for restaurants and corner stores to purchase produce at bulk prices
 - We are looking to expand our Pop-Up Market model to reach more customers throughout the neighborhood.
- ii. Do you have any recommendations for future activities and, if applicable, an outline of next steps or additional research that might advance the project goals?
 - Our organization has seen tremendous success in the area of worker-owned cooperatives, across different sectors of work. Many of our community residents are disqualified from jobs or at least discriminated against in the traditional job market, and we see cooperative business building as a way to build locally grown power.
 - We believe that expanding urban agriculture production will also reduce costs on purchasing.